



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE BOLLES COLLECTION OF AMERICAN FURNITURE¹

VERY little has been written about the progress of our American forefathers in the arts of design. Material for such a history may be found scattered among the proceedings of historical societies and in fugitive essays and papers, but the most valuable sources of information on the household economy of the early settlers, which embraces such matters, lie in the wills of those citizens who left property of value, and in the collections of furniture and other craftsmen's work which have survived the course of time, and which, until quite recently, were to be found chiefly in private hands.

To the wills we must go for the colloquial names of objects, for their current values, and for an idea of their prevalence, usefulness, and the sentimental appreciation attached to them. We know that many of the early settlers, especially those of means, brought their household effects with them from the mother country, and the wills help to determine this fact, as well as the dates of the beginnings of the industries and the time when one or another of the various styles was introduced. They give us, in other words, current nomenclature, values, and dates. For instance, the will, dated 1657, of Theophilus Eaton, who came over in 1637 and became governor of the New Haven Colony in 1639, distinguishing himself as the author of the Blue Laws, shows him to have been possessed of such furniture as a gentleman of his social rank in England would have had: chests and chests with drawers, cupboards, livery cupboards, bedsteads, tapestry covers and carpets, rugs, cushions of Turkey work and of needlework, great and small chairs, high and low stools, long and short tables, pewter and silver, which, with other things, brought his estate up to the value of £1,515-12-26. Doubtless all of these things were sent out from England to grace the official residence, since, while it might have been possible

to find cabinet-makers, pewterers, silver-smiths, etc., among the colonists capable of supplying his needs, it is not likely that they would have been called upon by the Governor, even if they had begun to ply their trades at so early a date (the colony was founded in 1638). Thus the value of this particular will lies in its testimony to the kinds of objects which were shipped to New England in the middle of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, wills of less important persons than a royal governor show objects similar to those listed above, but undoubtedly made here.

In the collections of cabinet work, ceramics, textiles, etc., we must seek our demonstrations. Among early collectors, of furniture particularly, the names of Dr. Irving P. Lyon, most discriminating and scholarly, the author of the first authoritative work on American furniture, and Albert Hosmer, himself a cabinet-maker and indefatigable in his search for seventeenth-century Connecticut pieces—both of Hartford; Charles L. Pendleton, of Providence; and H. Eugene Bolles of Boston, stand out prominently as having preserved to us this class of documents, which otherwise might have been lost. The Lyon and Hosmer Collections, long ago dispersed, have been largely drawn upon for the illustration of recent books on furniture; the Pendleton Collection, now in the possession of the Rhode Island School of Design, has furnished material for a useful work on eighteenth-century types; while because of the wideness of its scope, embracing examples of every type and variation of type of furniture used in the colonies from their settlement until the nineteenth century, the H. Eugene Bolles Collection offers an unrivaled field for the study of our craftsmanship. A Boston lawyer by profession, Mr. Bolles began collecting when there were still many sections of the country uncombed by the dealer and the itinerant collector and, enjoying the association with men like Hosmer and Lyon, recognized authorities as well as pioneers in the art, he succeeded in enlarging his collection beyond the bounds of his contemporaries—including, at length, many pieces from the former's

¹A notice of this collection was published in the BULLETIN for January, 1910, at the time of its acquisition.

THE AMERICAN WING

collection, and all of the seventeenth-century pieces in the latter group. His collection was bought by Mrs. Russell Sage in 1910, and was presented by her to the Metropolitan Museum in the same year. Thus, representing the industry and knowledge of three collectors of distinction, it finds a permanent home where it is available to students of the industrial arts for all time.

Some idea of the extent of this collection, which will be shown more completely and to much greater advantage in the new Wing of Early American Art than has been possible hitherto, may be gained from the following figures: the total number of pieces of furniture, not counting the examples of pewter and other metalwork, leatherwork, and textiles which it also embraces, is 434. Of these, six pieces dating from the sixteenth century were brought into the country by the first settlers; 144 pieces belonging to the seventeenth century are partly of native workmanship and partly of English make; and 258 pieces belong to the eighteenth century, when the local craftsmen's shops were in full operation, but when many fine pieces were still imported. Thirty-four pieces of the collection are of early nineteenth-century make.

The seventeenth-century pieces of Amer-

ican make, of the same forms as those shown in Governor Eaton's will, are of native woods, chiefly oak, and include chests, court and press cupboards, tables, chairs, stools, and boxes; while the home-made pieces of the eighteenth century add to the list, just as in England, the more elegant walnut and mahogany highboys, lowboys, chests of drawers, desks, mirrors, and clocks—everything, in fact, used in households of the period.

While emphasis may be laid upon the value of the Bolles Collection in connection with the study of the development of the craft of cabinet-making in America—it may be used to illustrate a chapter in the yet-to-be-written history of our industrial arts—it ought to be remembered that this is not the only point of view from which the collection should be considered; it furnishes just as valuable material in another field, which has not yet received the attention of the writers of books, the history of our national arts of design. Here may be seen the give and take in inherited forms and motives of design among the different crafts, and, what is still more interesting and important, the local variations of the inherited styles, and the original contributions—for these have been made—to the general grammar of ornament.

H. W. K.

